

Nutrition Times

Reliable Nutrition Information for Your Health

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Fad Diet Best Sellers Katey Johansen MPH, CHES

Recent best sellers include “the *Zone Diet*”, “*Sugarbusters*”, “*Dr. Atkins New Diet Revolution*”, with more titles in the works. There are even diet books prescribing diets based solely on your blood type! Most of these diets are written by individuals with wonderful sounding credentials that encourage you to buy the book. Don’t be fooled. These individuals make inaccurate statements and often cite scientific studies that either don’t exist or are outdated. Let’s take a look at the *Zone Diet*.

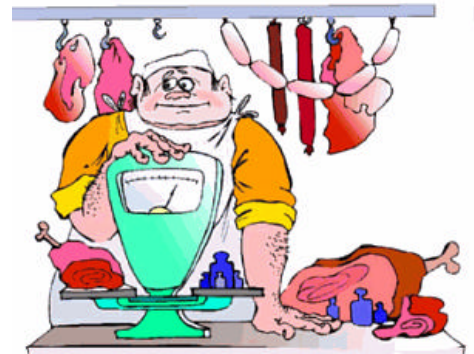
The Zone Diet

A recent best seller, promises quick weight loss. But should you follow

the *Zone Diet*? The *Zone Diet*’s author, Dr. Barry Sears (Ph.D. in chemistry) recommends a diet containing 40% calories from carbohydrates, 30% calories from protein and 30% calories from fat. This is in contrast to the dietary recommendations by the National Cancer Institute, the American Dietetic Association and the American Heart Association, which suggest a healthful balance of carbohydrates, protein and fat - with carbohydrates contributing at least 55% of total calories, protein 12-15%, and fat no more than 30%, of which no more than 10% is saturated fat. Dr. Sears argues that a higher carbohydrate diet

increases insulin levels in the body. But in fact, insulin levels change when you eat, whether you eat protein, fats, or carbohydrates.

Continued on page 3



Is Kava Right For You? Patricia Stabile, RD

Linda, a single working parent, decided to try kava after hearing about it on a national TV program. The product claimed it would relieve stress and anxiety, but Linda found it only made her sleepy. She then questioned the quality of the product. Was the dosage right? Or was kava right for her at all? Linda’s concerns about kava are correct. Current research has not been able to prove with complete confidence that kava is safe or right for everyone.

So what is kava? Kava is a plant that has been around for centuries and was ceremonially used by the natives of Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia. The root of the kava plant was chewed or made into a drink by mixing it with water and coconut milk. It produced a calming, relaxing effect and did not

seem to alter consciousness. Kava was also used by the native people for its overall health benefits. They believed it could induce sleep, counteract fatigue, treat asthma, rheumatism and even help with weight loss.

Kava made its way into the Western world via Germany where it once was standard treatment for gonorrhea. Today, Germany and France are using kava as a prescribed medicine for anxiety related health problems. Kava is also being used in the United States as an alternative to standard drug treatment for the relief of anxiety. Its suggested use is to replace tranquilizers like Valium and Xanax.

Continued on page 2

In this issue

Fad Bestsellers	1 & 3
Is Kava Right For You?	1 & 2
Are Dietary Supplements Foods or Drugs	4 & 5
Effects of Herbal Products on Surgery	5
Community Activities	6

Is Kava Right For You? (Con't.)

So how is the quality and effectiveness of kava evaluated? The measure of quality for kava and its effectiveness is its pyrone content, the key active ingredient. Many current research studies were done with 70% kava pyrone content. The important point here is how kava may be purchased in the different countries. In Europe it is sold by prescription and therefore the standardization, quality, effectiveness and dosage of kava products are well regulated. However, in the U.S., the FDA does not regulate kava. Therefore, the consumer really does not know from product to product the quality; effectiveness, consistency or even if the product contains kava pyrones at all.

So why use kava instead of the standard medications for stress and anxiety? The beneficial claims of using kava, according to some current research and those promoting its use, are that there are no risks of physical or psychological dependency, which may occur with Valium and Xanax. However, kava is not free from other health risks as current research also indicates.

Kava affects the nervous system as a spinal depressant, which means, kava can act like a sedative, muscle relaxant or pain reliever without affecting the brain. Thus, if kava is taken in excess it can depress both the movement and sensory function of the spinal cord, making the person difficult to walk. In the Aboriginal population in Australia, many cases of kava abuse are being documented. Some symptoms these individuals have been presented with include choreoathetosis, or a jerky involuntary

movement of the limbs, trunk, neck and facial musculature, dermatopathy or scaly skin, yellowing of the skin, weight loss due to malnutrition or loss of appetite, reduced levels of albumin, plasma protein, urea and bilirubin, decreased platelet and lymphocyte count, shortness of breath and pulmonary hypertension.

In addition, it was reported that one man in the US who mixed kava with his prescription drugs became lethargic and disoriented and was hospitalized. This report raises a red flag for the potential and dangerous interaction between kava and prescription drugs. As the popularity of kava increases, so does the danger of drug interaction.

The beneficial claims of using kava are no risks of physical or psychological dependency. However, kava is not free from other health risks as current research also indicates.

Although some research states kava is non-addicting, that remains to be seen. The clear and repeated abuse of kava indicates the potential abuse of this new natural relief for anxiety and stress in the US. The FDA already recognizes among children there could be the potential abuse of kava as an intoxicating, non-alcoholic product. Keep in mind, **anyone can buy kava**, the airplane pilot, truck driver, bus driver, railroad engineers, taxi driver and many others whose altered reflexes and judgement could lead to tragedy.

So, is kava right for Linda? Is kava right for you? That depends on several factors. (See table 1)

Remember, kava is not right for everyone.

Table 1 Keep these in mind:

☞	If you are taking prescription medication(s), consult with your doctor first for possible drug interactions.
☞	If you are under care of a psychiatrist and taking prescription medication(s), kava most likely is not for you.
☞	If you are suffering from other physical ailments, check with your doctor, again, kava may not be right for you at this time.
☞	Children under 18 years old and pregnant or nursing women should not use kava.
☞	If you try kava, do not combine it with alcohol, prescription tranquilizers or other drugs.
☞	Driving a vehicle may be risky after ingesting kava.
☞	Clinical studies indicate only cases of mild anxiety should be treated with kava preparations.
☞	According to the <u>Rational Phytotherapy a Physician's Guide to Herbal Medicine</u> , "generally the duration of use of kava should not exceed 3 months." (The doses of kava extracts used in clinical studies did not exceed 60 to 120 mg. of kava pyrones.)
☞	If you have been suffering from stress or anxiety for a long time, don't just treat the symptoms with kava, find the source of stress or anxiety and work on eliminating that instead.

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Fad Diet Best Sellers (Con't.)

In addition, he claims that certain hormone-like substances naturally produced in the body called eicosanoids have a powerful impact on fat metabolism. He argues that "good" and "bad" eicosanoids are made from different dietary ratios of carbohydrates, protein and fat and that the 40-30-30 dietary ratio is the best. He contends that the amount of "good vs. bad" eicosanoids you have in your body influences your risk of disease, your physical performance and your mood. He actually states that, by following *The Zone Diet* you can reset your genetic code!

Most health experts agree: the cause of obesity in the US is multifaceted, and due, in part, to our lack of physical activity and our high calorie diet. Americans eat about 20 pounds of sugar annually, and foods high in sugar tend to be low in other nutrients, high in fat and calories. Limiting these types of high calorie foods would lower your calorie intake, thereby reducing body weight. Coincidentally, if you follow Sears' bizarre diet to the letter, you would consume barely 1,200 calories. This is far fewer calories than most people eat. People *will* lose weight when they drop their calorie intake this low regardless of what they eat, and this weight loss may be primarily water and muscle mass if exercise isn't a part of the picture. Further, *The Zone Diet* promotes excessive protein intake, which can lead to excessive fat, especially saturated fat intake. Saturated fats are the artery clogging types of fats found in animal foods. In

women, excessive protein intakes also increases urinary calcium excretion, possibly increasing their risk of osteoporosis.

The Atkin's Diet

So what about the *Dr. Atkin's New Diet Revolution*? Even the cast of *Friends* swear by this version of the high protein, low-carbohydrate diet pushed by others. Dr. Atkins, a 69 year-old cardiologist, is enjoying a revival of his 1970's best seller, *Dr. Atkins Diet Revolution*. On his diet, he recommends a high-protein diet for two weeks, followed by a slow re-introduction of a minimal amount of carbohydrate foods to a level that allows you to maintain your new weight loss. He recommends supplements, including potassium, to account for those nutrients missing in his diet. Atkins, like Sears, claims that a high-protein diet helps to lower insulin levels, thereby reducing body fat synthesis. But it still advocates a bacon-and-egg breakfast, with a hefty cheeseburger (without buns) at lunch and more protein and fat at dinnertime!

This diet is high in saturated fat, which has been linked to an increased risk of heart disease and stroke. Other health risks associated with the high-protein, high-fat, low-carbohydrates diets include putting the body into a state of ketosis, which may lead to muscle breakdown, nausea, dehydration, headaches, light-headedness, irritability, bad breath, and kidney problems. In pregnancy, ketosis may cause fetal abnormality or

death. It can be fatal in individuals with diabetes.

The Cabbage Diet

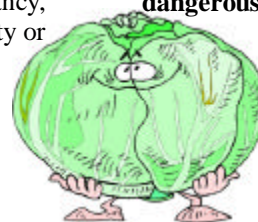
Although people have linked it to the American Heart Association, the Sacred Heart Memorial Hospital in Spokane and the Cleveland Clinic, none of these institutions have recommended or endorsed this diet. Like other fad weight loss diets, the *Cabbage Soup* diet is based on a cycle, which includes an all-you-can-eat "fat-burning" cabbage soup. The recipe for the soup varies across the nation, but the main ingredients are typically cabbage, carrots, celery, tomatoes, peppers and onion soup mix. Supposedly, if you follow the diet for a week, you can lose up to 17 pounds. But a weight loss that large can only be water loss, not body fat, especially if followers experience diarrhea, a common side effect of this diet. This lost water weight will quickly come back once a normal diet is resumed. This diet also claims, as many fad diets do, that you must omit certain food groups. For example, in one version of the diet, you only eat the salty cabbage soup on Day One with some fruit. Day four is a bizarre eat-all-you-want skim milk and banana feast.

The key concepts to follow when trying to lose body fat remain: exercise more and eat less dietary fat. There is no magic pill or quick way around these key concepts. Fad diets are expensive, wasteful and dangerous to your health.

(See Table 1)

Table 1: Fad Diets are Characterized by:

■ Omitting entire food groups
■ Claiming quick weight loss (more than 2 pounds per week)
■ Encouraging bizarre eating habits
■ Claiming certain foods, when combined, encourage or release fat storage
■ Require taking specially formulated "supplements"
■ Claiming certain foods will "cleanse" or "detoxify" your body
■ Claiming certain foods or dietary supplements will "burn fat"



Web Sites

<http://www.eatright.org>
<http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health/nutrit/pubs/choose.htm>
<http://shapeup.org>
<http://www.cyberdiet.com>
<http://www.quackwatch.com>

Are Dietary Supplements Foods or Drugs?

The Regulatory Dilemma

Prosy Abarquez-De la Cruz, J.D.

Chunky Tomato Soup with St. John's Wort", "Cold buster 100% Juice with Echinachea and Zinc", "Immunity Green Tea for anticancer, antiviral, and anti-fungal properties" - these are some of the food labels that state regulators have encountered recently. In the past, the boundaries distinguishing foods from drugs were clearly defined. Foods included items consumed for nutrition and characterized by sensory qualities such as texture, taste, feel, and color. Drugs were used or intended to affect the structure and function of the body, or to (diagnose, mitigate, treat, cure, or prevent) disease. Food product manufacturers could not claim their products had the effects of a drug unless the product had been approved as a drug.

Yet, the marketplace has seen an explosion of products previously marketed as conventional foods (soups, teas, beverages, and bottled water) now represented as dietary supplements with structure, function, or disease curative claims.

GROWING PUBLIC INTEREST IN DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS

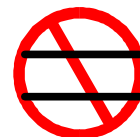
The reason for this explosion is the Dietary Supplement Health Education Act (DSHEA), a law sponsored by the dietary supplements industry and enacted by Congress with broad popular support. DSHEA added the category of "dietary supplements" to those for foods and drugs. Dietary supplements would not be represented as conventional foods, and statements would be allowed to describe how its ingredients affect structure or function in humans if the statement is truthful and not misleading. However, the statement could not claim to diagnose, mitigate, treat, cure, or prevent a specific disease or class of diseases, and a disclaimer is required that reads: "This statement has not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease."

DSHEA clearly did not allow dietary supplements to become "pretend drugs." Yet, the unclear perimeters for structure and function claims under DSHEA have been seen by some as opportunities to make explicit disease curative claims in conventional foods such as beverages, teas, and bottled water. Consumers have been surprisingly willing to experiment on themselves. Whether in pursuit of additional energy by taking sports nutrition drinks, of feelings of euphoria and mood elevation by taking herbs, of a reversal of the aging process, or the control of tumors or cancers, consumers often turn to dietary supplements without demanding the substantiation that they would require of drugs.

CONSUMERS MAY BE MISLED TO DO SELF-TREAT DISEASE

Our experience as a regulatory agency bears this out. In Los Angeles, a group of pharmacists approached the California Department of Health Services - Food and Drug Branch (FDB) and requested that we take action on falsely advertised herbal supplements. The experiences of several elderly diabetic men were cited. These men were persuaded to take herbal supplements, promoted for "diabetes management", in place of insulin. The men required immediate medical intervention to prevent lapse into coma. FDB substantiated the complaint and took the necessary regulatory action to abate the unlawful business practice of false advertising.

It is quite a stretch from the undefined perimeter of structure/function claims to marketing strategies that sell teas and beverages for cancer, or soups to cure depression, or snack chips to boost memory. These are examples of false and misleading labeling claims that violate California Health and Safety Code (H&S Code) Section 110760 and Section 110395.



STATE OF CALIFORNIA TAKES POSITION THAT FOODS ARE NOT DRUGS

Recently, FDB imposed embargoes on close to \$ 1,000,000 worth of products for false/misleading label claims:

FALSE/MISLEADING LABELING CLAIMS		CORRECTED CLAIMS
Green Tea	"Protect the body's cells from harmful and aging effects of oxidation." "Echinachea may, help stimulate body's defenses."	The History of tea began around 3 rd Century B.C. in the western mountains of China, where the Camelia Sineses Tree can be found. Tea was originally revered for its healthy properties, then later grew to be widely enjoyed as a splendid social beverage. Gold Teas are specially formulated with exotic teas from around the world and have been enhanced with the addition of herbs, nutrients and other natural supplements. Teas do not contain artificial colors, flavors or preservatives.
Spice Tea	"Known to improve memory and increase blood flow." "Encourages the elimination of toxins due to pollution."	
Oolong Tea	"Benefit memory and to stimulate circulation." "Improve cardiovascular health and to stimulate body's defense."	

Are Dietary Supplements Foods or Drugs? (Con't.)

FALSE/MISLEADING LABELING CLAIMS		CORRECTIVE ACTION TAKEN
Immunity Green Tea Nutritional Supplement Beverage	"Stimulates immune system and reproductive systems." "Anti-cancer properties."	All disease curative claims have been deleted from the labels. "Immunity" has been dropped from the common or usual name. The Nutrition Facts panel has replaced the Supplement Facts panel.
Potency Fruit Punch Nutritional Supplement Beverages	"Improve blood flow to sexual organs." "Circulatory tonic, anti-depressant aphrodisiac."	All disease curative claims have been deleted from the labels. "Potency" has been dropped from its common or usual name. The Nutrition Facts Panel has replaced the Supplement Facts panel.

FDB met with the top decision-makers of these companies and explained the legal ramifications of their marketing strategies. FDB found that most of these firms had been relying on in-house experts or outside consultants for information. These firms were willing to work with FDB. Most of these companies devised corrective action plans within 48 hours. Accurate labels were affixed to the products and FDB was able to lift the embargoes placed on the products. The demarcation between foods and drugs was further delineated as it was established that beverages are conventional foods.

Did FDB protect public health? Did we stop economic fraud? We believe we did.

Reference: Public testimonies presented at the Dietary Supplement Stakeholder meeting July 20, 1999 at the Royal Auditorium Federal Building.

About the Author: Prosy Abarquez-Delacruz, J.D. is a Regional Administrator for the State of California Department of Health Services' Food and Drug Branch. She provides regulatory oversight to processed food manufacturers and distributors, which include dietary supplements, through a public health-law enforcement team composed of supervisors and investigators in Southern California. She is current the chair-elect for the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Division of the American Society for Quality. She holds both a Bachelor's Degree in Food Technology and a Juris Doctor Degree, and has over 20 years of experience in regulatory affairs. She is an educator who works closely with industry associations such as Consumer Health Care Products Association and the Council for Responsible Nutrition, which include dietary supplement manufacturers in their membership. She can be reached at PDELACRU@DHS.CA.GOV or at (213) 580-5720; Fax (213) 580-5750.

Effects of Herbal Products

on Surgery Esther Ho, RD

Anesthesiologists Warn: If You're Taking Herbal Products, Tell Your Doctor Before Surgery

EVEN THOUGH HERBAL PRODUCTS are billed as mild, "natural" routes to good health, they can have harmful effects – just like drugs. Herbal products are very popular with the American consumer, with use reported to have increased by 60% in just one year. But consumers must beware! It is a mistake to think that any herb or other medicinal product is harmless or completely safe just because it is called "natural" or "herbal". If anything, herbal potions may be more dangerous than a prescription drugs, since herbals do not go through the same strict federal testing and approval procedures as prescription drugs. The American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA), for instance, cautions that some herbal products can be dangerous for patients about to undergo surgery. The ASA notes that a number of anesthesiologists have reported significant changes in heart rate or blood pressure in some patients who have been taking certain herbal medications. The risk is greatest, of course, if the patient's anesthesiologist or surgeon does not know that the patient is taking the herbal product. The herbal products of particular concern to the ASA include:

- ☞ **St. John's wort** May intensify or prolong the effects of some narcotic drugs and anesthetic agents.
- ☞ **Ginkgo biloba** May increase bleeding.
- ☞ **Feverfew** May increase bleeding
- ☞ **Ginseng** May increase blood pressure and heart rate.



St. John's wort

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW....

☞ **Stop taking herbal medicines at least two to three weeks before surgery** to allow the herbals to clear from your body.

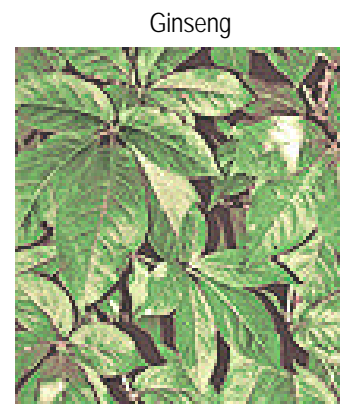
If there is not enough time to stop your herbal medication before your surgery, bring the product, in its original container, to the hospital. This allows the anesthesiologist to see exactly what you are taking and what the ingredients are.

☞ **Always tell your physician or other health care provider** that you are taking over-the-counter medications, herbal products, and/or dietary supplements. This applies to all medical situations, not just for patients about to have surgery.

Source: The American Society of Anesthesiologist Public education on Herbal Information 1999. [www.ASAhq.org/Public Education/herbal.htm](http://www.ASAhq.org/Public%20Education/herbal.htm)



Ginkgo biloba



Ginseng



Community Activities

Confused About Nutrition Products? You're Not Alone Leigh Anne Rice, RD

Good nutrition can help individuals lead healthier lives but often the messages consumers receive are confusing. To help the community, the County of Orange Health Care Agency has launched The Orange County Nutrition Alert Coalition (OCNAC). Through consumer education, the coalition intends to increase the community's awareness regarding nutrition misinformation and health fraud. Areas that are currently being addressed include fad diets, updates on unsafe nutrition products, and clarification of misleading claims found on common nutrition products.

According to Esther Ho, RD, coordinator of the Orange County Nutrition Alert Coalition, "Consumers have the right to receive reliable, science-based information, enabling them to make informed decisions regarding the use of questionable nutrition practices." The Coalition is comprised of members of various regulatory agencies, community, and governmental organizations, as well as interested members of the community. A primary goal is to actively promote networking and information exchange on nutrition related issues through bimonthly meetings and conferences. Currently the members are working to increase awareness of nutrition quackery to targeted groups, promote consumer health education in schools, and identify community resources. Questions or concerns for the coalition may be directed to:

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Nutrition Services
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Santa Ana, CA 92706
(714) 834-7775

NUTRITION TIMES

The NUTRITION TIMES is published biannually by the Orange County Nutrition Alert Coalition of the County of Orange Health Care Agency, Nutrition Services Program. It is intended to keep the public and consumers informed on reliable nutrition information. The coalition is dedicated to the promotion of optimal health and nutrition through consumer education and awareness.

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Your Input

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California Children's 5 a Day Power Play! Campaign Is coming to Orange County

January marks the start of the newest "5 a Day Power Play! Campaign" in Orange County, which targets 9, 10, and 11 year old children to eat 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day. *The Power Play! Campaign* is funded through a grant from The California Endowment to the University of California Cooperative Extension. To join the effort in Orange County, contact Anne Cotter at (714) 708-1611.



Health & Nutrition ESSAY CONTEST

For Orange County High
School Students

To encourage our youths to think critically about health, explore reliable sources of information and share their findings, Orange County high school students are invited to enter the third Annual Health & Nutrition Essay Contest. The essay contest is cosponsored by the County of Orange Health Care Agency Nutrition Services and the Office of Health & Wellness Administrator of the Orange County Department of Education along with eight community organizations.

Students with winning essays will be awarded savings bonds, and their essays will be displayed at the Orange County Hall of Administration. Entry forms are distributed to all Orange County public and private high schools. Deadline to submit essay is March 13, 2000. For questions, call Esther Ho at (714) 834-7775 or Dawn Robinson (714) 834-7984.

Seminar Sports Nutrition & Supplements

David Lightsey, M.S., an exercise physiologist and nutritionist who coordinates the National Council for Reliable Health Information's Task Force on Ergogenic Aids, will present "Sports Nutrition and Supplements-Separating the Facts from the Hype" for the San Bernardino County Nutrition Quackery Prevention Task Force's 14th Anniversary Celebration and Presentation on Thursday, February 24, 2000 at the Loma Linda Medical Center. 2 CEU's are available to R.D.'s. Call Julie Mortimore, R.D. at (909) 387-6331 for more information.

In Next Issue

- ⇒ Antioxidant Supplements and the Prevention of Heart Diseases: Hype or Hopes.
- ⇒ What Does Research show about the Effectiveness of Glucosamine and Chondroitin Sulfate in Osteoarthritis?